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C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 001412

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DEPARTMENT FOR EAP, EAP/MLS
PACOM FOR FPA (HUSO)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/07/2015

TAGS: PREL PTER TH

SUBJECT: SOUTHERN VIOLENCE: BUDDHIST HOMES RAIDED, OTHER
VIOLENCE

REF: BANGKOK 826 (AN EMERGING REALITY ON THE GROUND)

Classified By: Political Counselor Susan M. Sutton. Reason 1.4 (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: In the early morning hours of March 6 a group of 10 to 15 militants raided several Buddhist homes in the far southern province of Pattani, killing three villagers and setting fire to two houses. The raid follows a series of arson and bomb attacks seen across the region over the past week. The raid appears to be another deliberately provocative act aimed at intimidating the local Buddhist populace. END SUMMARY

¶2. (C) At approximately 0400 on March 6 a group of 10 to 15 armed men raided a small group of Buddhist homes located in the Muslim-majority village of Managyong in Pattani's Yaring district. The gunmen shot and killed an elderly Buddhist couple after forcing their way into their house. The attackers set fire to two Buddhist owned houses and shot and killed another Buddhist man who attempted to put out the blazes. Pattani Deputy Governor Thira told Emboffs that up until a year ago the village of Managyong had 14 Buddhist families. However, most of them had left and mostly elderly Buddhists families remained.

¶3. (C) The raid follows a series of arson and bomb attacks seen across the region over the past week. On February 28 a bomb went off in a crowded market in Sungai Kolok in Narathiwat, injuring 9. On March 1 a bomb exploded in front of the Chanae district office in Songkhla province, injuring 6 police. On March 2 there at least 20 simultaneous arson attacks against cell phone towers across several districts of Pattani. There were several other shooting and bombing incidents during this period. Deputy Governor Thira said there had been a noticeable increase in violence following the political crisis in Bangkok.

¶4. (C) COMMENT: During a February 22 speech, General Naphon Bunthap, a military aide to the royal family, said that a high number of Buddhists had left the far South over the past year. He cited several districts in Narathiwat which had lost most or all of their Buddhist population over the past year (for example, Dusongyo village went from 220 Buddhist families to 12). The raid on the Buddhist homes in Pattani, while a relatively small incident, is nonetheless troubling as it appears to be yet another example of a deliberately provocative act aimed at intimidating the local Buddhist populace into leaving the region (reftel). END COMMENT
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